

COL. PLAYFAIR'S LETTER ON THE

OTTAWA, FEBRUARY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "BRITISH STANDARD."

SIR.—As the country is still agitated on the question of the proper place for the Seat of Government, for the two Provinces, I beg leave through your columns to make some remarks on the all important subject.

The rejection of a decision of arbitrators in common transactions between two individuals, is considered dishonorable, and generally terminates in all further transactions between the parties. If then, such a circumstance in common life awaken such feelings of disgust, how must it look in the eyes of nations for a majority of a Legislature, a body supposed to be the most intelligent of the community in which they live, and not only jealous of their own, but their country's honor, should so far forget their standing in society, and that high toned morality which ought to characterize the representatives of a people, so blessed with religious and secular instruction, as we are in Canada, as to reject the decision of their Sovereign, after an official request of a majority of that body, concurred in by the Upper House, and ratified by an act of Parliament, after Her Majesty graciously condescended to comply with the request, which was Her prerogative as our Sovereign to command. We should remember that the United Parliament of Canada after expending hundreds of thousands in the perambulating system, and endless debates on the vexed question, on the floor of the House, made the appeal, *not* to the Colonial Secretary or any of Her Majesty's Ministers, but to herself as the Queen of Great Britain; and in rejecting her decision, we not only offer a gratuitous insult to our loving and lawful Sovereign, but we stultify ourselves in the eyes of all honorable communities both of the old and new world—looking for greater privileges as provincials than the subjects of the United Kingdom enjoy. It is Her Majesty's Royal prerogative to command Her Parliament to meet at York, or Lancaster, or any other place as well as at Westminster. William the IV. of England, was appealed to as umpire on the eve of a war between France and the United States, relative to some shipping which Napoleon the 1st. had destroyed. The Crowned Head of England decided that France should

the mother country, let us contemplate for a few moments the probable results if Britain was to withdraw her protection and leave us to our own resources. We should fall into the arms of the United States on their own terms, like a starving garrison, surrendering at discretion. We have no Navy, and one single ~~44~~ would blockade the St. Lawrence, our only Port, and bring us to their own terms. The avails of all our public lands would be sent to Washington; ship yards would be established on the St. Lawrence, to build a navy to menace the British West Indies whenever she may, like in 1812, have her hands full, or be physically exhausted by a long war. We should also be taxed for an army and navy, and all the redress open to us would be a remonstrance to Congress; a most humiliating position for British born subjects. This is only some of the evils that would befall us generally. But some of the inhabitants of Canada would have more to complain of. Let me ask my Lower Canadian friends of the Roman Catholic persuasion, if they would meet with the same religious liberty under the eagle that they do now under the British Lion? If they answer in the affirmative, I tell them to look to Boston, Ohio, and other places where their public buildings have been demolished by a Sovereign Democratic mob, and the authorities refused to make good their losses. Again, I ask, has one single State, with laws, customs, religion, and language differing from the rest of the American Continent held its own civil and religious liberty as it does at present. A glance at the Star-spangled banner, emblematical of their numerous states, answers the question, beyond a doubt if Napoleon the 1st. was correct when speaking of the U. States, in saying, "That nation without honor." To be independent we must have a navy, and not only a navy, capable of repelling an American fleet, but the combined fleets of America and Russia. The United States with all their boasted love of freedom sympathized with Russia in the late war, and would not let the munitions of war pass from Quebec through their territory, to be shipped to the Crimea, notwithstanding Russia is one of the most despotic and absolute monarchies on the continent of Europe. Pa-

floated on the bosom of the deep (Rules the Waves,) without its single fraction; and when our invaded England was always ready her blood and treasure to defend safe and happy position we will rapidity of a drama, a stupendous British Colonies extending from to the Pacific, with a dense population developing the resources of the region; and the products of China of the Pacific no longer doubling but coming direct on British territories, in their own inland seas, to be carried North American Continent. With the continuation of Protection to the finest countries in the world under the blessing of God the strong arm of Great Britain.

Having now briefly shown our Colony, our prospects and our will now shew that Her Majesty's favor of Ottawa City is just, c

The following table exhibits the City of Ottawa as regards the longitude may be thus stated:—For Toronto, $79^{\circ} 28'$; Kingston, $76^{\circ} 38'$; Montreal, $73^{\circ} 31'$; Quebec, Newfoundland, $55^{\circ} 20'$. The taken as $70^{\circ} 10'$. The position Capital of the confederated Provinces afford.

The following table of distances late newspaper article on the seat of Government gives further centrality of Ottawa in view of

OTTAWA IS DISTANT FROM	
Montreal, C.E.	100 miles.
Three Rivers, C.E.	175 "
Quebec, C.E.	240 "
Chicoutem, Port,	323 "
Saguenay, U.E.	323 "
Fredericton, N.B.	455 "
St. John, N.B.	490 "
Pictou Mines, N.S.	665 "
Halifax, N.S.	612 "
St. Johns, N.F.	1100 "

In the first place, Ottawa City both Provinces, begin only a them, and a line, according to Eu without breadth. Ottawa City Canada on the south side of the and Hull is on the north side of

ON THE SITE OF GOVERNMENT.

VA, FEBRUARY 10, 1859.

on the bosom of the deep, (Britannia the Waves,) without its costing us a fraction; and when our country was England was always ready to pour out blood and treasure to defend us. In this happy position we will see with the eye of a drama, a stupendous chain of

Colonies extending from the Atlantic Pacific, with a dense population in the developing the resources of that extensive : and the products of China and Islands Pacific no longer doubling the Capes, coming direct on British territory to our island seas, to be carried all over the American Continent. We only want continuation of Protection to make us one finest countries in the world, and Protection under the blessing of God depends on strong arm of Great Britain.

ing now briefly shown our position as a , our prospects and our weakness, I now shew that Her Majesty's decision in of Ottawa City is just, equitable and

following table exhibits the position of city of Ottawa as regards the question of creation. The different degrees of longitude may be thus stated:—Fort Garry 97° ; to, $79^{\circ} 28'$; Kingston, $76^{\circ} 30'$; Ottawa, 75° ; Montreal, $73^{\circ} 31'$; Quebec, $74^{\circ} 16'$; undland, $55^{\circ} 20'$. The centre may be as $76^{\circ} 10'$. The position of Ottawa as a of the confederated Provinces is the Provinces afford.

following table of distances taken from a newspaper article on the subject of the of Government gives further proof of the utility of Ottawa in view of confederation:

OTTAWA IS DISTANT FROM—		
al, O.E.	100 miles.	Kingston, C.W., 26 miles.
ivers, O.E. 175	"	Port Hope, C.W., 178
C.E.	240 "	Toronto, C.W., 225 "
em Port, 133	"	London, C.W., 304 "
ton, N.B., 455	"	Windsor, C.W., 440 "
n, N.B., 495	"	Sault St. Marie, 475 "
Mines, N.S. 665	"	Lake Sup'r Mines, 650 "
N. S. 612	"	Fort Garry, 1140 "
the N.P. 1150	"	Red River,

the first place, Ottawa City is central to Provinces, begin only a line between , and a line, according to Euclid, is length but breadth. Ottawa City is in Upper lands on the south side of the Ottawa River, Hull is on the north side of the same river

personal experience. Ottawa City is 50 miles inland, and strong by nature, and, with little expense would be made stronger by art. It is one thing for an invading force to just land and attack in the rear whi' the heavy gons afloat are bombaring the town for a few hours, and then, before a force can be collected, retreat.—

It is another thing to land in an enemy's country and march into the interior, with battering train and all the necessaries for such undertakings. It may be said that the Rideau Canal would facilitate the transport of their guns, &c., &c. If they attempt it, they and their guns would soon be left high and dry by drawing off the water; and the distance they would have to march would give our militia an opportunity of retarding their progress in the old style of 1812. Thus it is wise to make choice of a site for a capital that is difficult to be approached by an enemy, and safe for the Government Records.

Again there is not another city in British America with such abundant water power for mills and manufactures. The Great Chaudiere —the one bank in Upper Canada and the other in Lower Canada; and the Gatineau in Lower Canada; and surrounded for miles by a beautiful agricultural country producing every description of grain. Another advantage is that through the City of Ottawa and the Valley of the Ottawa is the nearest route from Montreal to Fort William on Lake Superior, and to Chicago on Lake Michigan. To go to either of these places by the St. Lawrence you must travel two sides of a triangle, viz: from Montreal to Toronto 333 miles, from Toronto to Collingwood 95 miles, railway, steam navigation 40; total, 460 miles. This is the two sides already mentioned. The third side is from the eastern shore of the Georgian Bay to Ottawa City 200 miles, from Ottawa City to Montreal 110; total, 310 miles. A saving of more than one-fourth of Railway transport, besides about 50 miles steaming on the Bay.

As the eastern shore of the Georgian Bay is nearer to this inlet than it is to Collingwood by about that distance. This is considering the Ottawa and Georgian Bay railroad terminus, opposite the inlet from Lake Huron; but if the terminus was located at the north-east corner of the Bay, then there would be a greater

Georgian Bay, Toronto, St. Lawrence, and Hudson River

1418

Georgian Bay, Ottawa, and Hudson River

1378

From New York to Liverpool 2680 geographical miles, which must be added to either of these routes.

Walter Shanly, Esq., C. E. reports:—

From Chicago to Montreal by the Welland Canal

1348

By Toronto and Georgian Bay

1050

French and Ottawa Canal

980

Northern Railway and Grand Trunk

958

Eastern shore of Georgian Bay through Ottawa City by railway (Ottawa Railway, proposed some years since by the writer). *ME*

810

This is the shortest route of all. We will add 168 miles to Quebec, and 2502 to Liverpool, being 3480 miles from Chicago to Liverpool; that is navigation from Chicago to the eastern shore of the Georgian Bay, and rail from thence to Quebec. We will now compare the shortest route from Chicago to New York, viz., 1210, and 2980 geographical miles from New York to Liverpool; total 4190, being 710 miles longer by New York than by Quebec. Thus both by the Ottawa Canal and Ottawa Railway, it is nearer from Chicago, the centre of Commerce in the West, to Liverpool, than any other route.

Our geographical position gives us an advantage in a Pacific Railway, and also for the transit of produce from Chicago to Europe by Quebec, over the United States, which no earthly exertion on their part can obviate, providing *you* avail yourselves of your natural highways decreed by divine Providence. A degree of longitude at the equator is 60 miles, and at 60 degrees of latitude it is only 30, or one-half. Now the route from the western coast of Ireland by Quebec to the Pacific, at the month of Fraser's river, may traverse ten degrees of latitude, that is from 45° to 55°. The former 45 is 40 miles and 15 seconds; the latter 60 is 34 miles 41 seconds. We might average it at 39 miles, which is not quite two-thirds of a degree at the equator. Hence the time is not far distant, when by steam navigation and railway, passengers will be half-way across this continent to the Pacific by the time a steamer to New York will touch the wharf.

Provinces begin only a line between about that distance. This is considering the average it at 39 miles, which is not quite two-

of England, was appealed to as umpire on the eve of a war between France and the United States, relative to some shipping which Napoleon the 1st. had destroyed. The Crowned Head of England, decided that France should indemnify the United States, by paying a large sum of money. Did France reject His Majesty's decision? No! Old France did not forget French honor. Did England or the United States reject the decision of the Crowned Head of Holland as their umpire? No; their honor was at stake. Did Greece or Turkey reject the decision of England, France, or Russia? No; their honor was in the scale. But we have the example of a majority of the united Parliament of Canada (a dependency of the British Crown) rejecting in undignified language the will and decision of their Sovereign, which no doubt was formed after mature deliberation.

Notwithstanding the above, and the honor of the Parliament at stake, an individual of unenviable notoriety, had the presumption to move that Ottawa was not the proper place for the Seat of Government. This certainly was extraordinary. But what was more extraordinary still, is that a majority in a Canadian Parliament could be found with such little self-respect as to vote for and carry the motion. It is obvious from the above that Canadian honor when weighed in the balance of Nations is "found wanting." This was carrying out to the letter what I have heard some silly individuals say (that because Canada shows signs of one day becoming a great country) "we are independent." We believe that British North America will become a great Empire, but Canada at present is only in the germ—the infant giant in leading strings—an Ajax at its mother's breast; and the rejection of Her Majesty's decision is not only dishonorable, but a stretch of Parliamentary power beyond its constitutional limits, and most impolitic for a dependency like the Canadas, whose geographical position, though admirable for commerce, most deplorable for independence or defensive warfare; and at the very moment holding out one hand to grasp half a continent, and the other six millions of dollars from the imperial coffers of loaned money, to be converted into the Intercolonial Railway; that is forgiven our debt. While it is admitted beyond contradiction that we are growing unprecedentedly fast under the fostering care of

and would not let the munitions of war pass from Quebec through their territory, to be shipped to the Crimea, notwithstanding Russia is one of the most despotic and absolute monarchies on the continent of Europe. Paradoxical as it may seem there is a great similarity in the two nations—one is a tyrannical monarchy, the other a tyrannical democracy—that is, in the first, the monarch holds absolute sway over the people, the other, the sovereign people, hold sway over the civil and military powers of the nation; the one has its serfs, the other its slaves; the one has its aristocracy of nobles, the other its aristocracy of skin; the one aims at universal dominion in the old world, the other universal dominion in the new, though I think it is extremely probable that they would agree to divide the spoil between them. The Russian Bear would claim and put his paw on a larger portion of the North West territory for a more extensive hunting field, and the American Eagle would extend her wings from the Straits of Behle to the Straits of St. Foca, and hold the highway of the world in her talons. Any one must be very little acquainted with the depravity of the human heart, or the history of the world, to doubt for a moment that half a continent possessing such an advantageous geographical position and riches, such as the largest coal fields yet discovered, unbounded mineral wealth, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial capabilities, extensive hunting fields, with fur-bearing animals, the best and nearest track for the iron horse from Europe to Asia, with the magnificent navigation of the St. Lawrence, its spacious lakes, &c., &c., would be left quiet and unmolested without an army or a navy to protect them, must believe that the prophecy has been fulfilled, and the lion and the lamb will lie down together. If we did but consider we would see as plain as the sun in the firmament at noonday, that our position as an integral part of the British Empire is most enviable, and at this period of our history, can not be bettered; that our advantages are great, that every good subject, who wishes to live peaceable, quiet and harmless lives, must appreciate their happy lot; that, instead of spending our means on a navy for our defense, we are enabled to expend the surplus revenue in developing the resources of our highly favored country; that our commerce is protected by the most powerful navy that ever

both Provinces, begin only a them, and a line, according to Eu without breadth. Ottawa City Canada on the south side of the and Hull is on the north side of in Lower Canada, and the Union unites the two Provinces is b Thus Ottawa is at the south end Bridge, and Hull at the north end Fridge in Lower Canada. Could more equitable or just and wise disputes. The inhabitants in One-third French Canadians, are represented in Parliament by a of the Roman Catholic persuasion an equilibrium in political power we ask, what is there to prevent of the City to the Lower Canada is to prevent Hull becoming as large The Village of Charron, now C was first occupied by the ancient few huts; it did not prevent the London across the Thames, and Canada, with her splendid works that side of the river, will become great manufacture; the water about equal, or if any difference of Lower Canada. I have been particular in minutely describing the judicious choice of our location at a distance, but most particularly express information of the leader his place in the House, in my speech he did not know anything about Ottawa, he did not want to know, that any Upper Canada member would never get his foot on the House after a dissolution. I hope will pardon me for this digression I have proved to all unprejudiced Her Majesty's choice is equitable will now show that it is wise.

Most ancient capitals are inland—London, Paris, Madrid, &c., &c., of course for heavy guns afloat to bombard the city. Toronto was the capital of Upper Canada, and being on the frontier taken and the government buildings to a pile of ashes. Kingston was in alarm. The above I know

+ A West-Burlong

Provinces, begin only a line between
, and a line, according to Euclid, is length
but breadth. Ottawa City is in Upper
ada on the south side of the Ottawa River,
Hull is on the north side of the same river
over Canada, and the Union Bridge which
s the two Provinces is between them.
Ottawa is at the south end of the Union
bridge, and Hull at the north end of the Union
bridge in Lower Canada. Could anything be
equitable or just and wise, to prevent
this? The inhabitants in Ottawa City are
third French Canadians, and the city is
seated in Parliament by a gentleman of
the Roman Catholic persuasion, which shows
a equilibrium in political power. And, let
us ask, what is there to prevent the extension
of the City to the Lower Canada side, what
will prevent Hull becoming as large as Ottawa?
Village of Charron, now Charron Cross,
first occupied by the ancient Britons, in a
few months; it did not prevent the extension of
London across the Thames, and Hull in Lower
Canada, with her splendid water power on
the side of the river, will become a place of
manufacture; the water power being
not equal, or if any difference, it is in favor
of Lower Canada. I have been the more par-
ticular in minutely describing Ottawa City—
a judicious choice of our beloved Sovereign
not only for the information of persons resid-
ing at a distance, but most particularly for the
less information of the leader of the Opposi-
tion in the Canadian Parliament; who said in
the House, in my hearing, that he
did not know anything about Ottawa, and fur-
ther he did not want to know, but declared
any Upper Canada member that would
vote for the Seat of Government at Ottawa,
would never get his foot on the floor of that
House after a dissolution. I hope my readers
will pardon me for this digression; but, I think,
we have proved to all unprejudiced minds that
Majesty's choice is equitable and just. I
now show that it is wise.

Most ancient capitals are inland, such as Lon-
don, Paris, Madrid, &c., &c., of not easy access
to heavy guns afloat to bombard them. To-
ronto was the capital of Upper Canada last
and being on the frontier, was easily
attacked and the government buildings reduced
to a pile of ashes. Kingston was also in a state
of arm. The above I know to be true by

about that distance. This is considering the
Ottawa and Georgian Bay railroad terminus,
opposite the inlet from Lake Huron; but if
the terminus was located at the north-east
corner of the Bay, then there would be a greater
saving of distance in going to the Sault St.
Marie, Red River, &c. The railway being
longer and the navigation shorter. To prove
my assertions correct, I will call Ottawa City
A, Toronto B, and the north-eastern shore of
the Georgian Bay, C; which forms almost an
equilateral triangle, and any two sides of which
must double the third side. Prescott is nearly
as low down as Ottawa City, and is two hun-
dred and twenty miles from Toronto; from
the latter to Collingwood by rail, 95
miles; from thence to C the terminus of the
Ottawa railway at the north-east corner of the
Bay, 80 miles; total, 175; this latter route be-
ing the shortest. But although B C is the
shortest it shews the precise number of miles
travelled out of a direct course, and the other
two sides are about equal: and what would the
people of Toronto and other parts of the west
think of travelling from Montreal to the north-
east shore of the Georgian Bay, and thence to
Collingwood to Toronto, which would be pre-
cisely the same distance out of the way,
namely 170 miles, in a journey of about 240.
The interest of the West has been and is great,
but a paramount interest is rising in the N.
West; and our roads must divide in Lower
Canada, the one to the west passing up through
Prescott, the other through the City of Ottawa,
and thence to the Georgian Bay. A man tra-
velling from Montreal to Chicago—when he
arrives at Prescott he is already out of his
proper line of travel, but he must go on to
Toronto, 220 miles, when there he finds he
has to travel 95 miles by rail, and about 70 or
80 by navigation to the inlet, a total of 165,
when he was within 250 miles of the same
place at Prescott—money, time, and labor lost.
But, for further proof, compare the distances
from Chicago to New York by Kivas Tully,
Esq., C. E.

Buffalo, Erie Canal, and Hudson River

1315

Welland, Oswego, and Hudson River

1638

Welland, Champlain, and the Hudson

River

1846

Georgian Bay, Toronto, Oswego, and
the Hudson River

1219

average it at 39 miles, which is not quite two-
thirds of a degree at the equator. Hence the
time is not far distant, when by steam naviga-
tion and railway, passengers will be half-way
across this continent to the Pacific by the time
a steamer to New York will touch the wharf;
the mail to Quebec will be within 1600 miles
of Victoria or Vancouver's Island. It must be
remembered, that when the steamer arrives at
Quebec, the other, bound for New York, allowing
equal speed, will be 470 geographical miles
from New York, allowing 12 miles an hour for
an Atlantic steamer, on the average, and 24
miles an hour for the rail cars. And as they
do not measure by geographical miles, we will
add 50 in round numbers, to put the whole in-
to statute miles, which will be 520—double that
of the speed of the cars—and the mail bags
would be 1056 miles on their way across the
continent, in about longitude to 90 and 50 N
latitude. What a brilliant prospect for the
Commerce of Canada. What a start in the
race set before the inhabitants of this growing
country; we can view it in no other light than
the young lion in its lair.

From what has been said, it is obvious that
Lower Canada and the Eastern part of Upper
Canada have but one interest, and the ball is
at our foot, if we are only inclined, Ottawa
Railroad and Canal will go on, the foul stain
of dishonor in our rejecting the Queen's deci-
sion will be washed away, and the great high-
way for the world will be opened through our
Capital, and a vast amount of produce that
would be drawn off to the Atlantic cities, will
pass through Quebec. In a public letter which
I wrote some eight or more years since, I said
then, and am of the same opinion now, that if
Montreal or Quebec is to become the ~~Cincin-~~
~~nati~~ ^{new orla} of the St. Lawrence, they must intercept
the traffic on the lakes; and it is only by open-
ing the Ottawa Canal and Railway this grand
object can be obtained, and Lower Canada
become the emporium of the West, and attain
that standing in the Commercial world, that
nature has designed.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obed't serv't,

A. W. PRATTAIR.

Bathurst, Jan. 7, 1859.